

AMISH COUNTRY

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NEWS



Holiday Theater in Lancaster

Gifts That Make
a Difference at the
Re-Uzit and Thrift Shops

Discover Amish Life
on a Visit to
The Gordonville Book Store

Christmas Comes to
the Choo Choo Barn
in Traintown USA



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— at The Amish Experience Theater —

presents

“A Christmas Journey”

November 23 Through December 31

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Route 340 Between Bird-in-Hand & Intercourse

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For Show Schedule and Discount Tickets Visit
www.MagicLanternTheater.com

DUTCH HAVEN

AN AMISH COUNTRY LANDMARK

Travelers have been traversing Lancaster County along Route 30 for well over two centuries. And for over 70 years, a very special building has signaled their arrival in Amish Country. It has a legitimate claim on being the area's oldest visitor landmark. Most importantly, it's the "place that made shoo-fly pie famous." That iconic structure is the **Dutch Haven** windmill.

With a history dating back to the beginnings of tourism here, the building is rich in memories. From the time it started as a luncheonette in 1920 right up to the present, it has remained most famous for shoo-fly pie, served warm with whipped cream. The Dutch Haven shoo-fly pie has even been mentioned in a TIME magazine article.

Today, as soon as you walk in, you'll be offered a free sample of that same delicious, gooey pie. Some 40,000 pies are baked

annually, using the original (secret) recipe. Visitors are still encouraged to "Take one for yourself or send one to someone nice." You can buy and ship pies home at the store or at their "online shop," where you'll find other local crafts as well.

Yes, Dutch Haven is much more than pies, with over 10,000 unique gift items, foods, and collectibles. Some of the most popular are jams, jellies, and canned goods, noodles, Amish pine furniture and cedar

chests, hex signs, quilted spice mats, Amish straw hats, jewelry and gemstones, Dutch Delft tiles, Amish dolls, onyx and soapstone animals, trivets, metal stars, Tiffany lamps, Amish romance novels, framed prints, plenty of T-shirts and postcards, and a tremendous selection of Amish-made outdoor furniture. It's an eclectic mix, to say the least.

As you explore, you'll discover lots of other "surprises" around every corner. Expect the unexpected! And don't forget the Amish-style root beer in the barrel.

Remember, Dutch Haven is open 7 days a week, Sunday–Thursday, 9 AM–7 PM and Friday and Saturday 9 AM–9 PM. For more info about this Lancaster County landmark, call 717.687.0111. Look forward to your free sample when you walk in under the welcoming arms of the windmill for this truly is the place that made shoo-fly pie famous. 





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Amish Country...Your Theater Destination for the Holidays

By Brad Igou

To the first-time visitor, Lancaster as a theater destination and Amish Country with its picturesque farmlands, horse and buggies, and farmers markets would appear mutually exclusive. Ah, but such is not the case! Here you'll easily discover a dozen different theater companies, with some productions even surpassing those on Broadway, but not at Broadway prices!

The one holiday story beloved by all is that of Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol."

Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre presents a delightful musical version of this perennial favorite. For a grumpy old miser, is it really too late to change? When he's visited by three ghosts – Past, Present, and Future – his selfish ways are self-revealed and Christmas morning is greeted with a new found happiness, as good will to all becomes his new way of life. This version has tuneful songs by Alan Menken, famous for his music for Disney's "Aladdin," "Beauty and the Beast," "Newsies," and "The Little Mermaid." Shake off your humbug November 15–December 30. www.dutchapple.com (See ad pg. 10)

But how would people have experienced Dickens' stories in the 1800's, if not on a stage? They would have journeyed to a Magic Lantern Show. Long before movies, the magic of projected images was achieved with magnificent wood and brass devices that became known as "magic lanterns." Artwork was created on oversized hand-painted glass "slides," as a traveling Showman wove tales of wonder, playing each of the characters of his stories. The **Plain & Fancy Theater** features a rare 1890's three tiered-lantern and original period slides with which the talented Showman re-creates this unique Victorian experience. With special lighting, music, and effects, "A Christmas Journey" is a show you literally can only see here in Lancaster. Shows on select dates November 23–December 31. www.magiclanterntheater.com (See ad pg. 2)



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Magic of a more traditional kind can be enjoyed with Illusionist Brett Myers and friends at the **Bird-in-Hand Stage**. Created especially for the holidays, the "Magic & Wonder of Christmas" combines amazing illusions and heartwarming comedy with the best of the holiday spirit. As you sit and wonder "how did he do that?" you will also leave happy and even inspired by the true magic of the Season. Shows run November 7–January 1. Visit their website at www.lancastermagicshow.com. Also playing is a new holiday musical called "A Christmas to Remember," in which a couple faces challenges as owners of a thrift store, and caregivers for an elderly patient. Intriguing characters and dramatic moments reveal unexpected treasures in the most unlikely places. Dates are November 6–December 29. Visit www.bird-in-hand.com (See pg. 25)

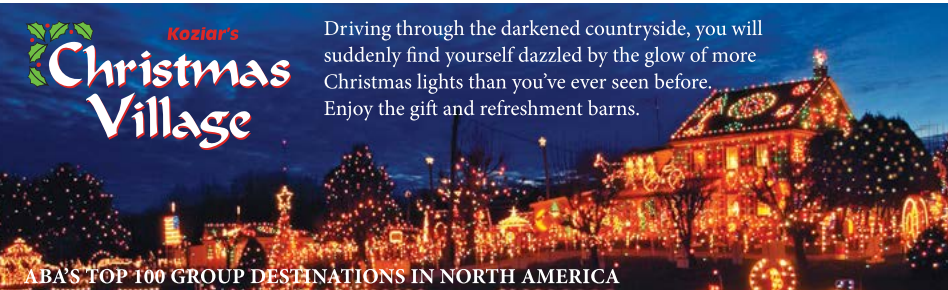
Another live dinner theater long popular with locals and groups is **Rainbow Comedy Playhouse**. At Rainbow, it's all comedy, all the time. This year you can see their most loved holiday story, "Christmas in Paradise," by Sherry Konjura. A Lancaster County Amish family shares the true meaning of Christmas with some big city visitors who have lost their way. Both laugh-filled and touching, if you have not yet seen the show, you absolutely must. And if you already have, share it with friends and family. Dates are November 3–December 29. www.rainbowcomedy.com (See ad pg. 14)



For those looking for a true interactive experience in a very different setting, head for **Mount Hope Estate & Winery**. They have taken their popular Murder Mystery Dinner Theater and turned it into a Holiday themed mystery. Nothing says the holidays quite like a good who-dunnit! The setting is the



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stunning Victorian Mount Hope Mansion. Here you'll enjoy traditional Christmas tales and caroling performances blended with a delicious four-course dinner, surrounded by beautiful holiday decorations and zany characters. Dates are November 24–December 23. www.parenfaire.com (See ad pg. 12)

Along with many other theatrical performances, home tours, retail and outlet shopping, diverse dining options, and special holiday events, you won't find a more diverse and exciting destination than Amish Country for celebrating the Holidays! 

Gifts That Make A Difference

by Clinton Martin

In 1920 a group of Mennonites created the Mennonite Central Committee to aid hungry people in Russia and Ukraine. Today, the MCC is at work in every continent except Antarctica and Australia.

The Mennonite Central Committee's Global Family Education Program pays for vocational training, helping people in some of the most poverty-stricken regions of the world to develop skills which provide them with a sustainable livelihood. All this great work takes more than just a desire and a mission. It takes money to accomplish. Where does it all come from? Actually much of the money generated for supporting the MCC's efforts comes out of our own backyards. Over 16 million dollars of the MCC's annual budget comes from a very interesting source. A network of over 100 MCC Thrift Shops throughout the US and Canada.

While you're in Amish Country visit these shops. You'll know that while you are filling your shopping bag with merchandise you can use, you are also helping a worthy cause. For more information about the MCC Thrift Shop network, visit www.thrift.mcc.org.



Since graduating from an MCC-supported tailoring program in Juba, South Sudan, in 2013, Anet Konga, right, has established herself as a well-known tailor in her community. Photo courtesy of Lindsay Linegar.

Country Gift & Thrift Shoppe

717-768-3784 In the quaint village of White Horse, amidst the tranquility of Amish farms, shop two floors of upscale high-quality merchandise and treasures for the whole family. This hidden gem is your source for beautiful linens, lightly used clothing and shoes, brand name purses, jewelry, housewares, crystal, toys, books galore, and must-see vintage ware and antiques. The inventory changes literally every day. Come watch quilts being stitched by local groups in the Quilting Room. The store features a 50 cent clothing rack, a store-wide weekly half-price color tag sale, and select clothing is only \$1.00 on Saturdays. Hours are every Monday-Friday from 9am to 5pm, and Saturday 9am to 4pm. Shop in person and like them on Facebook for weekly specials. 2018 marks the 27th year of this shoppe. The shoppe's staff and volunteers are grateful that God has greatly blessed them so that they are able to reach out to the local community as well as those in need around the world. www.countrygiftandthrift.com.

Ephrata Re-Uzit Clothing & Housewares

717-733-4982 The small-town of Ephrata embodies the best of downtown Amish Country. There is plenty to do in this venerated borough, including some excellent thrift shop bargain-browsing. The Ephrata Re-Uzit shop is located on Main Street right beside the old train station, now the town's visitor center, with plenty of free public parking including hitching rails for buggies, since the local Amish and Mennonite communities enjoy shopping here too. With one of the thrift shop network's widest selections of clothing, this store offers a fine way to clothe the kids, mom, dad, friends, family, and even grandma



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MORGANTOWN
Re-Uzit Shoppe



Just West of Morgantown on Rte 23
2769 Main St. Morgantown
610.286.7233
Mon-Fri 9-5 • Sat 9-3 • Closed Sun

and grandpa. There is also plenty of glassware and kitchen items, plus a well-stocked toy corner full of dolls, trucks, puzzles, and plush items.

Ephrata Re-Uzit Furniture & Books

717-733.4934 On State Street at the south edge of Ephrata is a furniture and book warehouse not to be missed. Luxurious used leather couches and sectionals are available at fantastic prices, while a large selection of wooden furniture like hutches, dining room sets, and desks and end tables are on display beside an impressive variety of upholstered choices. Sharing space in this store is also an extensive selection of books and other media. Locals and visitors alike love that every purchase helps support disaster relief around the Country and the world. The easiest way to reach this store is to head North on Route 272 from Lancaster, taking State Street at the Y (use the Wendy's as a landmark) and turn right into the parking lot of the store directly after turning onto State Street.

Re-Uzit Shop of New Holland

717-354.8355 At the intersection of Route 23 and Shirk Road in New Holland is a very special thrift shop. It started in 1976 and was the first MCC Thrift Shop in Lancaster County. This is one of the largest thrift shops in the

entire MCC-supporting network. Retail space alone accounts for 26,000 square feet of items on display, with the entire building occupying 40,000 square feet! There is plenty of furniture, clothing, crafts, gifts, decorations, small kitchen appliances, dishware, hardware, antiques, collectibles, and lamps available in this multi-floor shopper's delight. This store has selected items for half price every week based on the color of the price tag. In addition, there is a section for 50 cent clothing. Known for a bright, clean atmosphere with friendly, helpful staff, this Re-Uzit offers shoppers a fine way to spend an afternoon in Amish Country. www.newhollandreuzit.org

Morgantown Re-Uzit Shoppe

610.286.7233 Morgantown is often considered the gateway to Amish Country from the east. It is an easy hop and skip off the PA Turnpike, the first welcome to Amish Country many visitors see, and can be easily reached from Berks, Chester, and Lancaster Counties. On Route 23 just west of Morgantown stands a Re-Uzit shop full of thrifty and useful finds. This store has everything for daily life's necessities. Apparel, décor, home goods, toys, gifts – shop here before you go to a regular retail store. You'll probably find what you're looking for, save money, and support a worthy cause all at the same time. A great collection of vintage collectibles and antiques is a fun bonus. "Like" the store on Facebook to see more photos, specials, hours and directions.

The Main Street Closet

717.464.2038 Main Street Closet is an interesting shop in the center of Willow Street. This fun store has a little bit of everything for everyone. If you are a collector, stop in to see if you can find a special treasure. There is an ever-changing variety of household items, books, shoes, collectibles, games, toys, kitchen items, glassware, tools, holiday items and clothing for the entire family. Check out the silent auction items that continually change. Every week items with a different color price tag go on sale for 1/2 price throughout the store. From Lancaster take Route 272 south. Turn left on the second road past Kendig Square Shopping Mall, which is West Willow Road. Proceed several blocks to the corner of West Willow Road and 272 north. If traveling north on Route 272, turn left on West Willow Road to enter the parking lot. www.mainstreetcloset.org

With items on display at various stores above always changing, stop in at one or more of them and remember that you are not only helping yourself to quality merchandise at a fair price but helping other folks in need at the same time. 



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The story of New Holland goes back to well before the founding of our nation. The instability in Europe in the late 1600's spawned the pioneer interest in the deep forest lands of Pennsylvania. Besides religious freedom and a peaceful existence, English Quaker William Penn offered cheap land to settlers in the New World.

The village founders were German, not Dutch. They were surrounded by English and Welsh Quakers, Episcopalians, a few Swiss-German Mennonites and some Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. The Amish arrived later.

The town was once known as New Design. But in 1802, when a post office was established between Leola and the tavern at Blue Ball, an official name was necessary. There was no dissension to naming the town New Holland. These grateful people remembered how extremely kind the inhabitants of Holland were to them when they fled persecution and sought religious freedom in America.

Today, travelling along Route 23, visitors often find themselves sharing the road with Amish buggies. 

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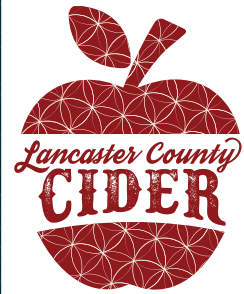
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Put "2017 photo contest" in subject
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Photos become property of Amish Country News/Amish Experience and may be used in upcoming issues,
publications, and/or other promotions. Photos should depict scenes, aspects, events, or activities typical to
Lancaster or the Pennsylvania Dutch Country region. We accept photos via email, and request no more than 10
photos by the same person be submitted. File names should contain your name. In the email include your name,
address, and phone number. Details on location, date, or subject matter of the photograph should also be included.

STRASBURG – TRAINS & HERITAGE



A ride on the historic Strasburg Rail Road, pulled by an authentic steam locomotive, is a "must do" for visitors to Amish Country. Photo Credit: Donna Gingrich

Named for the city in France, Strasburg is often referred to as "Train Town." In the 1700's, the village was on major commercial wagon routes. In the 1850's, a rail line connecting it with the Philadelphia and Columbia main line near Paradise helped keep the town's commerce active. And a hundred years later, to save the steam locomotives from demise, a group of local enthusiasts turned to passengers and visitors to keep America's oldest short-line running as the now famous Strasburg Rail Road. Not surprisingly, Strasburg is now home to several wonderful train related attractions. All aboard! 🚂




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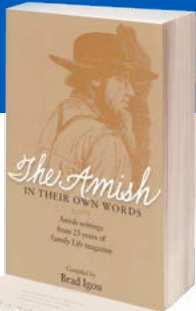
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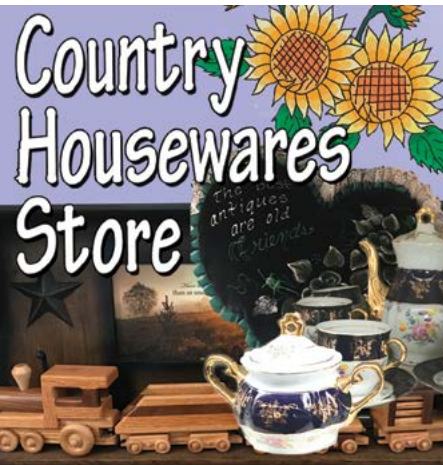
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Amish Life At Gordonville Book Store

By Brad Igou



Out in the countryside a mile south of Route 340, you'll drive through Gordonville, famous for its fire hall "mud sales," the auctions that raise money for the volunteer firemen. Just a bit further south at 275 Old Leacock Road, you may miss a sign for the Gordonville Book Store. But, once there, you'll see parking places for cars and horses, with a polite sign at the hitching rail that says "Please do not block the horse tie."

When you walk through the door of this modest building, you enter into the world of the Amish, represented by far more than just books. I make it a point to visit this store a few times each year, just to see what's new. You could probably write a thesis on Amish life based on what you find.

But let's start with the books...definitely an eclectic mix of many with particular interest to the Amish – cookbooks, Amish romance novels, children's books, family histories, song collections, and various church related books, some in German, including the Amish hymnal, the "Ausbund."

Nearby are shelves devoted to school books. If you ever wanted to know what texts are used in a one-room school, this is the place to find out. Titles run the gamut from "Dick and Jane" to "Let's Learn German." I noticed other interesting titles, such as "Climbing to Good English," "Tips for Teachers," and "Pilgrims and Strangers in the Land of the

Continued on Page 19.



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Getting to Know YOU at Jake's Country Trading Post

By Brad Igou



For many years, the staff at Jake's Country Trading Post on Route 30 in Paradise have enjoyed meeting and talking to their customers, getting to know them, and helping them find what they are looking for. Since opening over 20 years ago, the shop has grown from one to two buildings along Route 30 in Paradise. The lawn display alone attracts many passers-by. With so much merchandise to choose from, I asked what's new and popular for Christmas shoppers this year.

Park Designs offers a line that is well-liked by many, and Jake's offers a large selection of window treatments and matching tabletop place settings. But you will also find a broad collection of country, farmhouse, casual, rustic, Williamsburg, Americana, and much more to choose from.

Nothing says Christmas quite like candles, and Jake's jar candles are a favorite item, including a soy line and large 64 ounce 3-wick candles, just to mention a few. Also popular is the essential oil diffuser with a variety of 100% pure oils, including lavender, peppermint, and lemongrass, among others.

But wait, guys love Jake's, too! There is a huge variety of tin signs and items for your favorite sports team, all ideal for your man cave or garage.

I hope that gives you just a taste of the variety and extent of what you will discover exploring Jake's. The staff there will be happy to help you find what you are looking for. So stop in at 2954 Lincoln Highway East and start exploring. Jake's is open seven days a week. Call 717-687-8980 or visit www.jakeshomeaccents.com 

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Special to AMISH COUNTRY NEWS



Celebrate the holiday season as the Choo Choo Barn transforms Taintown USA® to bring the magic of Christmas to its gigantic model train display. For the eighth year, the Groff family continues their annual tradition of decorating the miniature homes and businesses along the tracks and sharing their holiday spirit with visitors from November 15 through December 31, 2018.

The Groffs will once again hide Santas on the layout for each year the Choo Choo Barn has been open. That means there are 57 Santas for visitors to find! The annual "Santa Search" is always a hit with all ages, and this year's newest Santa won't disappoint! (You'll have to visit to find it for yourself!)

Locals and visitors alike enjoy this amazing train layout, filled with many Amish

Country landmarks. But at this time of year, you'll find holiday decorations throughout the display, including lights and a snow-covered landscape.

Watch as Santa's sleigh flies above the 1,700 square foot model train extravaganza, which includes 150 hand-built animations and 22 moving trains.



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The Choo Choo Barn is located along Route 741 East at 226 Gap Road, Strasburg. The display is open daily from 10 AM-4:30 PM, now through December 31, 2018 (closed November 14, 22 and December 25). Check the website for possible January dates. For more information, call 717.687.7911 or visit www.choochoobarn.com.



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THE TOWN OF INTERCOURSE

Very few towns in Amish Country are more famous than Intercourse. Even Harrison Ford was in town filming the movie "Witness" over 30 years ago. Since the early 1700's, the town was a stop on the Old Philadelphia Pike, connecting Lancaster with Philadelphia, with a tavern called "Cross Keys." In 1814, a real estate scheme based on changing the name to Intercourse failed. But the name stuck, signifying the intersection of roads and mingling of people in this quiet country village. By 1880, the town had a population of 280 and, as it still does today, a post office where visitors can get a postcard dated and stamped "Intercourse, PA."

Amish Quilt shops abound in the farmlands around Intercourse, PA. Photo credit: Charles Rehm



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WHAT'S NEXT



Gordonville Book Store

(Continued from Page 13.)

Free ---American History from an Anabaptist Perspective.” There is also an array of materials, stickers, and decorations that teachers creatively use in the classroom.

Although there is a nice selection of commercial greeting cards for various occasions, I find particularly fascinating the section devoted to the making of hand-made greeting cards. This is such a popular hobby among the Amish, that an entire area of the store is dedicated to the supplies, hand-stamps, ink pads and decorations needed for making personalized cards.

Various gifts, children's toys, puzzles, craft supplies, candles, home décor, and so much more line the aisles. I was surprised on my



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last visit to see a small electric piano keyboard for children. I know some Amish play the harmonica, but the electric keyboard was something I had not expected to see.

Here is a special window into the Amish world, and I've noticed how difficult it is for visitors to leave the store without taking home something of interest. Personally,

I have learned much about Amish life from books and publications I found here. For me, it's always a shopping excursion, and an educational field trip!

Making hand-stamped greeting cards is a popular Amish past-time, particularly at Christmas. Want to try it? Pay a visit to the Gordonville Book Store.

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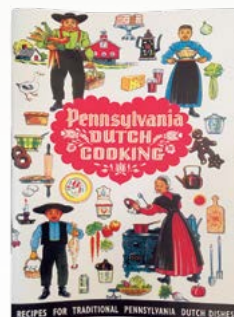
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Shows on the Hour

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Book Your Tickets Online and Save!

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Rare is the opportunity to meet with Amish families willing to share their traditions and beliefs with you. In a group whose size is never more than 14, this is the only Amish Tour to be designated an official "Heritage Tour" by the County of Lancaster. Visit an Amish farm at milking time, stop at a Cottage Industry, and finally enjoy a visit and chat with one of our Amish friends in their home.

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Holiday 2018 Tour Times & Hours

Amish Farmlands Tour Times

Until November 24 (Closed Thanksgiving)
10 AM, 12 PM, 2 PM 4 PM, every day

December 1, 8, 15

10 AM, 12 PM, 2 PM, Saturday only

December 17-31 (Closed Christmas Day)

10 AM, 12 PM, 2 PM daily

Amish Visit-in-Person Tour Times

Until November 24 (Closed Thanksgiving)

Saturday Only 5 PM

November 3, 10, 17, 24

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Open Seven Days a Week

Theater Shows on the Hour

House & School: Tours Quarter to the Hour

December 1, 8, 15

Saturdays only.

Theater Shows on the Hour

House & School: Tours Quarter to the Hour

December 17-31 (Closed Christmas Day):

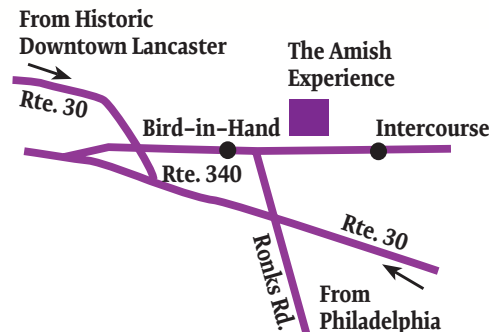
Theater Shows on the Hour.

Last show 2PM Christmas Eve

House & School: Tours Quarter to the Hour.

Last tour 2:45PM Christmas Eve

When you book your SuperSaver or VIP Tour at www.AmishExperience.com you are guaranteed the **LOWEST PRICE** and **no service fees**. A total savings of over \$6.50/adult. (Tickets are non-refundable.)



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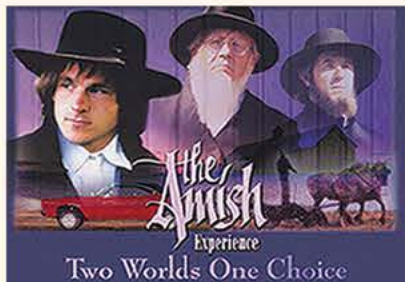
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Amish Farmlands Tour

Journey down rarely traveled back country roads, deep into the farmlands, to discover the sights sought after by visitors. Gain insights into the hows and whys of an ever-changing culture from certified guides in 14-passenger mini-shuttles. Stops may include a roadside stand, quilt shop, country store or craft shop on an Amish farm.



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Visit the only officially designated "Heritage Site" Amish house. As you walk through the nine rooms with your guide, unravel the riddle of Amish clothing, life without electricity, and eight-grades-in-a-room education as you sit at authentic Amish school desks.

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This officially designated "Heritage Tour" is a rare opportunity to meet and talk to the Amish personally. On this exclusive tour you will go right into the barn on an Amish farm at milking time, visit with an Amish artisan at his workplace, and then enjoy a personal visit and conversation right in an Amish home. Limited to 14 guests.

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Please see right hand page.



Buggy Rides

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Find books, videotapes, candles, toys and dolls, kitchen and home items, souvenirs, local handcrafts, Amish clothing, straw hats, bonnets, and last but not least...tasty treats.

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VILLAGE OF BIRD-IN-HAND



Fields as seen from Amish View Inn & Suites

Of the many unique village names that dot the Amish Country map, one of the more interesting is Bird-in-Hand. Local legend suggests that the distinctive name of this

village comes from an inn thought to be as old as the Old Philadelphia-Lancaster Pike, now Route 340.

The Pike became a well-established route of transportation for those traveling west from Philadelphia in the 1700s. Inns were built every few miles as convenient rest stops for travelers, waggoneers, and their animals. These inns were identified with signs hanging from a pole or attached to the side of the building. The story goes that as the Pike was being laid out, two road surveyors had a discussion. Should they stop at their

present location or go on to Lancaster to spend the night? One of them said, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." The other surveyor agreed with this suggestion, and both remained at what became known as the Bird-in-Hand Inn, with the story later memorialized with a sign depicting a man with a bird in his hand and nearby two birds perched in a bush.

A lot has changed since 1734, but visitors today can still expect friendly shopkeepers, homegrown Lancaster County foods, and restful lodging for weary travelers. 

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Wholesome, Uplifting Entertainment on Bird-in-Hand Stage

Special to AMISH COUNTRY NEWS

The Bird-in-Hand Stage brings live entertainment up close and personal, with musical theatre and magic shows in a unique Lancaster County setting. Take advantage of their on-site dining at the Bird-in-Hand Family Restaurant & Smorgasbord and treat yourself to a memorable experience. You can relax at the Inn on an overnight stay, too.

The Bird-in-Hand Stage is thrilled to present the new holiday musical *A Christmas to Remember*. In this new show, running November 6 to December 29, Matthew and Mary face unforeseen challenges as the new owners of a thrift store in Paradise, and caregivers for an elderly parent with Alzheimer's. The play's intriguing characters, unique situations, and universal themes reveal unexpected treasures in the most unlikely places. It's an inspirational journey perfect for the Christmas season.

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From November 7 to January 1, Brett Myers and his talented cast combine astounding illusions and heartwarming comedy with the best of the holiday spirit in the new show titled the *Magic & Wonder of Christmas*. It's a journey of joy, hope, and celebration that offers seasonal fun for all ages. Create lifelong memories as you rediscover the wonder and true meaning of Christmas in this magical production.

The Stage is located on the lower level of the Bird-in-Hand Family Restaurant at 2760 Old Philadelphia Pike in Bird-in-Hand. Discounted tickets with meal/lodging packages are also available. See coupon ad on page 24.

To order, see the schedule for the two shows, and to purchase tickets, call 800.790.4069 or visit www.Bird-in-Hand.com.

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Several years ago, I started working on a second volume of *THE AMISH IN THEIR OWN WORDS*, my book compiled from Amish writings in "Family Life" magazine. Since then, for many reasons, my project of producing "Volume 2" remains in limbo. Nevertheless, because I had begun to read and compile articles, I have decided to share some of them with you again this year as a continuation of my 2017 Amish Series. The series concludes with some musings about Christmas.

The Amish in Their Own Words

Vol. 2 – Part 14 • • • by Brad Igou

In Favor of the Simple Way

(Ontario parents)

Personally, we keep Christmas day in a quiet and simple manner, remembering the birth of Christ, His life and sufferings to redeem us.

With no gift giving and very few extra preparations of food (no candy, fancy cookies, or expensive fruit cakes), we can look forward to the occasion in a very relaxed way. Without great excitement before Christmas and without excessive eating, we no longer experience that common after-Christmas letdown and depression. The worldly way of celebrating Christmas:

1. Teaches children to expect something in return for their giving, rather than giving with singleness of heart.
2. Gives Christmas an air of undue excitement related to materialism, rather than encouraging a quiet contemplation of the birth of our Savior.
3. Fosters pride (in gifts given and received) rather than the humble spirit that Christ taught us.
4. Wastes our time in unnecessary shopping and food preparation.
5. Fosters excess materialism — often the gifts and food are not needed.
6. Encourages out-of-town shopping and hiring of drivers.

Perhaps in our weakness we are still keeping Christmas in such a way that someone feels we are dimming the light of Christ within us. May the Lord strengthen us to do everything to His honor and glory.

• • •

Gift Exchanging

My parents didn't give us Christmas gifts as children. We didn't feel slighted in any way.

Wouldn't it be much better to get your children involved in filling a gift box for someone who could use a little cheer or is needy in some other way? We all know of widows with children, or someone with hospital bills, or a special child. Or we could mention older folks and housebound persons, a family member or

friend in another state who would appreciate more contact with home folks, or even someone who is struggling to make ends meet. And don't forget the grandparents.

Here are some suggestions. Include something for each family member --- gloves, stockings, books, groceries, suspenders, a wallet, clothespins, or sew a little dress or shirt. Everyone appreciates a container filled with good homemade cookies. The wise men gave their gifts to poor folks, not the rich. Love is shown in many other ways besides giving gifts.

• • •

We have long felt that the Plain People make too much ado about Christmas. Not only is much money spent for gifts, there is also candy-making, cookie-baking, and big Christmas dinners. We've even seen sprigs of evergreen and candles and ribbons, or even wreaths in some homes.

If we observe a day for Christ's birth, it should be spent quietly as a holy day and not as a worldly holiday. We go to church in the morning and come home to a regular meal. Or we go visit friends or relatives like we would on a Sunday afternoon.

When I was a small girl, we used to get small useful gifts, and we learned to be satisfied and pleased with what we got. But nowadays some people go way overboard in buying expensive gifts, even though the money is not plentiful.

Yes, I feel it is very wrong to go to big cities just for Christmas shopping, and then go out and eat an expensive meal and have a good time, usually in the evenings and mostly young folks. Where are the parents?

Let us instead seek to lay up treasures in heaven and help the needy and poor (but not to get praise or a pat on the back). Let us all remember the coming of the Lord.

(An Ohio Grandmother) 

Our warmest wishes to you for a blessed Christmas and New Year!

Christmas Traditions

(Noah Hershberger, 12-93)

How should we observe the coming of Christ? Most of us probably have no trouble deciding to reject Santa Claus and the Christmas tree. But let us ask ourselves the question, "How many of the things we do to 'celebrate' Christmas are things we learned from the Scriptures, and how many come from the world?"

Maybe first of all we should change "celebrating" to "observing," and observe the birth of Christ in the same way the God-fearing people of old observed it when He was born. Maybe we should observe the birth of Christ as the shepherds did and go search for Him if we don't have Him in our hearts.

Maybe we should observe the birth of Christ as the angels did and sing praises in His honor.

Maybe we should observe the birth of Christ as the Wise Men did and worship the Savior with humble hearts and a giving spirit that doesn't fade away with the passing season.

Maybe we should observe the birth of Christ as Simon in the temple did, and carry Jesus in our hearts as Simon carried Him in his arms, speaking praises, prophecy, and wisdom. Maybe we should observe the birth of Christ as the widow Anna did, with fasting and praying day and night.

These are all examples of faithful, godly people --- good examples for us as Christians to follow. Those people give us a vision of joy, hope, and peace. Somehow it just doesn't match the modern idea of "celebrating a Merry Christmas."

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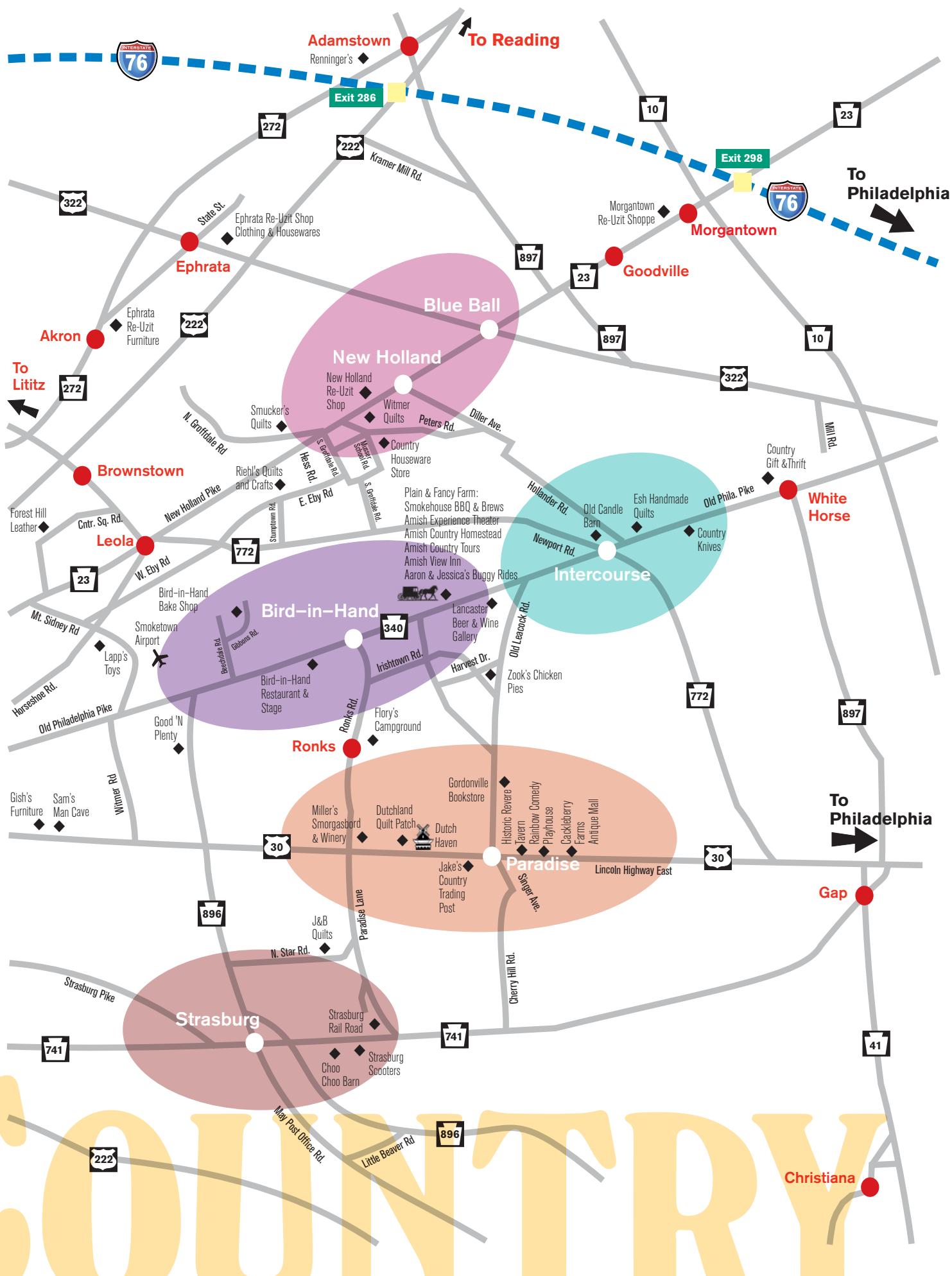


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PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

Getting invited to an Amish school Christmas program is always a treat for us non-Amish. To give you a taste, here are a few notes from one such event I attended many years ago.

As I entered the schoolroom, I noticed folding chairs and benches wherever they fit in between the desks. Benches were also along the sides of the room, where the "scholars" about to perform were sitting. I noticed all the boys were wearing the same cream-colored shirts, and the girls all had maroon dresses with black aprons.

The school was decorated simply, with some colored drawings of snowmen and such, really pretty cutout snowflakes on the shades, and some chain decorations from the four corners of the ceiling to a star hanging in the center. On the blackboard to the right was written "Jesus is the reason for the season."

Christmas at the One-Room School

By Brad Igou



Some simple thin pieces of cloth, almost matching the boys' shirts, were strung in the front on wires and would function as the curtains to be held shut by hand (or with clips) and then pulled open or briefly parted to allow scholars to stand in front. (This was also ideal for the scholars to occasionally take a peek at the audience!)

At 1:00pm, a student came out to give a short "greeting." Then the curtains opened and, quite dramatically, there were all the students, about 40 arranged in four rows by height (remember Amish one room schools have students from first through eighth grade), and they began to sing. According to our printed program, our performance would include 25 poems, skits, and songs. There was no mention of Santa Claus.

A student unseen behind the curtain shouted out the name of each poem or skit. As the nervous students recited their parts, most stared out over the audience. (A schoolteacher told me she used to instruct her students

to speak as if they were talking to something on the back wall.) Here is a sampling of the program

"Life Begins at 80" had two boys with canes coming on stage. The one who was 70 complained about how he was treated, and then the one in his 80's talked about how he was now excused for almost everything he did because of his age. That got a few chuckles from the audience.

"Twas the Night Before Jesus Came" was a clever revision of "The Night Before Christmas," in which Christ makes a surprise appearance to a family that was not ready for his coming.

"The Hundred Thousand Dollar Boy" was about a lad who thought he was poor and wanted more money. The girl asked him if he would sell his legs for \$25,000, and went on through arms, head, eyes, etc. The boy said "no" each time, and by the end they had gotten up to \$100,000, the lesson being obvious that he was rich indeed.

In another skit, a stranger is allowed to stay in a home for the night. But the couple mocks him for saying there are eleven commandments. "Everyone knows there are ten." The next morning they find the strange visitor has gone, leaving a note behind with a Bible passage. It's the one where Christ says there is a new commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself. That was the "eleventh commandment."

The conclusion was a "Tribute to Our Parents." First students sang all about Daddy, and his always being there through their needs and problems. Then there was a similar song about mothers. Each student then came off the "stage" and handed mom a rose, resulting in many a moist eye.

There was no applause throughout the program until the very end, at which time there was resounding hand-clapping, and many relieved students.

Certainly "performing" is not something Amish would normally do, but clearly for all who participate and witness, this is an unforgettable experience and an endearing custom. It is not surprising that the Christmas school performances continue to this day.

Those visitors who get to step into a schoolroom and see such a program are lucky indeed. When I arrived back at work and was walking from my car to the office through a damp, cold rain, I knew why I felt just a bit warmer inside. 



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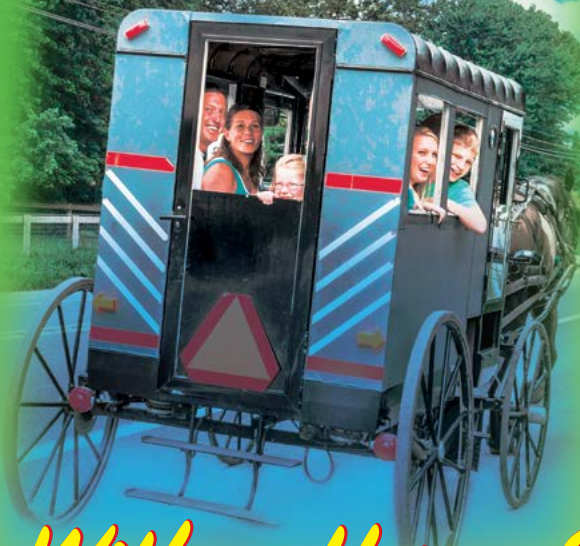
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